

Message Text

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S E C R E T CAIRO 05441

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS EG US UK IT
SUBJECT: MIG-21 MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

REF: (A) STATE 41458, (B) CAIRO 3837

1. AIRA LEARNED TODAY FROM HIS BRITISH COUNTERPART THAT SOME CONTRACTS (BUT NOT ALL) FOR THE EXPANDED MAINTENANCE EFFORT HAVE BEEN SIGNED AND ADDED THAT A LOCAL HOTEL IS FULL OF BRITS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM.

2. YESTERDAY, 17 FEB, AIR VICE MARSHALL NOFAL (EAF RETIRED), THE LOCAL AGENT FOR AERITALIA AND ALFA ROMEO, CALLED ON AIRA. HIS OBJECTIVE SEEMED TO BE TO IMPART THAT THE ITALIANS WANTED VERY MUCH TO KEEP THE BIDDING ALIVE. HE SAID THAT AN AIDE MEMOIRE HAD BEEN GIVEN TO HASSAN KAMEL, SADAT'S CHEF DU CABINET, WHEN SADAT MOST RECENTLY VISITED ROME. TIME HAD PRECLUDED ANY DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT IN ROME; HOWEVER, NOFAL WAS TO TRY TO SEE KAMEL TODAY FOR A READING.

3. REF B REPORTS MINWAR GAMASY FLAT STATEMENT TO CHARGE MATTHEWS THAT FINAL DECISION HAD BEEN MADE IN FAVOR OF BRITISH AND THAT USG SHOULD BE SO INFORMED (WITH THANKS FOR OUR EFFORTS TO HELP).

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4. WE BELIEVE THAT GOE DECISION TO ACCEPT BRITISH OFFER IS FIRM. WHATEVER DISCUSSIONS ARE GOING ON WITH ITALIANS ARE MOST LIKELY AN ATTEMPT TO LET THEM DOWN EASY, RATHER THAN A REAL SHOW OF INTEREST IN REOPENING NEGOTIATIONS. THE OVERWHELMING ADVANTAGES THE BRITISH HAVE, IN ADDITION TO COST FACTOR, BY BEING IN PLACE

AND DOING THE WORK IN EGYPT SEEM UNBEATABLE.

5. LOCKHEED AND GE EFFORTS TO PERSIST HAVE COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE BRITISH. COUPLED WITH CHANGE IN U.S. ATTITUDE ON ARMS SALES EVIDENCED BY RECENT DECISION ON F-5S FOR EGYPT, THEY VIEW THIS AS A SERIOUS THREAT TO THEIR EFFORTS. THEREFORE, THE BRITISH AIRA SAID HE WOULD BE OBLIGED TO REFRAIN FROM FURTHER DISCUSSION ON THIS SUBJECT UNTIL IT HAS BEEN COMPLETELY SORTED OUT. AIRA ASSURED HIS BRITISH COUNTERPART USG POSITION UNCHANGED ON MIG-21 MAINTENANCE.

6. AMBASSADOR HOPES TO SEE GAMASY EARLY NEXT WEEK AND WILL AT THAT TIME MAKE LOW KEY INQUIRY AS TO STATUS CONTRACTS. EILTS

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